***Dark Tourism and Pilgrimage Tourism***

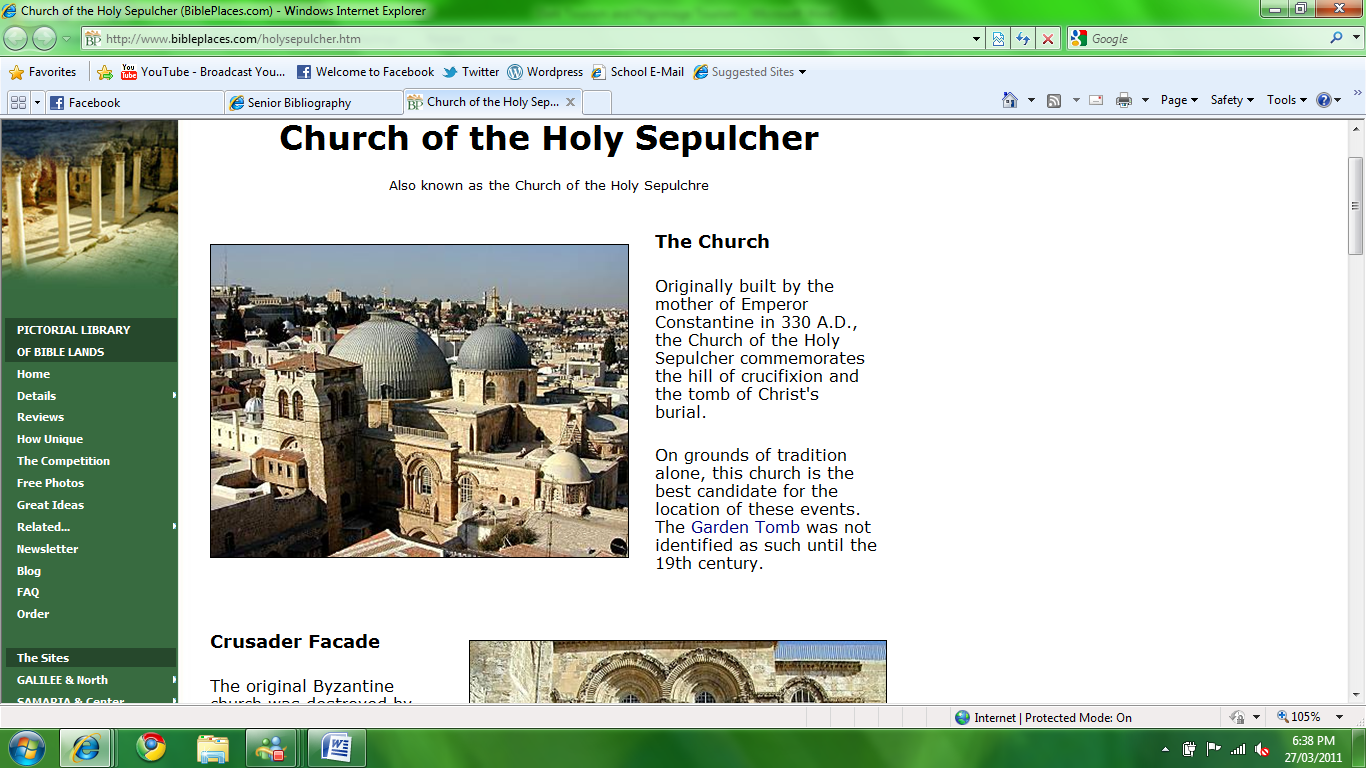
**Introduction:**

Special interest tourism, or niche tourism, is where people travel to different locations according to their specific interests in different segments of the tourism industry. The two types of special interest tourism that I will be comparing are *Dark Tourism* and *Pilgrimage Tourism.* Dark Tourism is the visitation of places that have been the location of death, pain and suffering whereas Pilgrimage Tourism is travelling for a spiritual purpose to a religious shrine or location (*Travel Industry Dictionary*). The reason for choosing these types of niche tourism is because they are similar due to the fact that people are attracted to them for things that have happened in the past, but they contrast as one is a negative reason and the other is a positive reason.

**History:**

As long as there have been tragedies, there has been Dark Tourism. It dates as far back as the medieval times where townspeople would gather in the town centre to observe executions (*Women on the Road)*. Nowadays sites where wars have occurred or massacre locations, which are both places where mass amounts of death and suffering have taken place, are what attract most tourists. Those who live in the places of such attractions have turned these horrific events into a profitable business by offering informative tours of the sites, for example in Saigon, Vietnam the spider and scorpion infested Cu Chi tunnels where many soldiers used to travel through (and die) during the late 1960’s have now been widened for curious tourists and there is even a place where you can fire a gun used by the soldiers during the Vietnam War (*Vacation Ideas*). Not all places of tragedy are marketed, as the horrific events that happened are still recent such as Port Arthur, location site of Australia’s largest murder massacre in 1996. There are no tours guided in that area and the local tour guidebooks ask that out of respect, no questions are asked about that day (*B. Doherty, 2006*).

“Death, dying and the dead are traumatic and anxiety producing topics, and can be better confronted if they are socially neutralized. Dark tourism, as part of wider popular culture, perhaps aids this ‘social neutralization’ process, and thereby helps people confront the taboo of death and unmasks it from the constraints of wider society.” (*P. R.* *Stone, 2005*)

Pilgrimage tourism is also a very old form of niche tourism as religion is an ancient aspect of human culture. All religions offer the opportunity for a spiritual journey of pilgrimage. There are countless religions and religious shrines for Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and even Wiccan, just to name a few other religions which attract those interested in Pilgrimage tourism. In Australia, most people are of a faith that falls under the category of Christianity (*See* ***figure 1***) so I will be referring to Christian places of worship. Places such as The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Israel, the alleged true place of the death and burial of Christ (*Bible Places*) are a very high priority of places to see for anyone perusing a pilgrimage under Christian faith.

*The Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Bible Places)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Christianity| | | | | | http://www.abs.gov.au/icons/ecblank.gif | http://www.abs.gov.au/icons/ecblank.gif | http://www.abs.gov.au/icons/ecblank.gif | |
| http://www.abs.gov.au/icons/ecblank.gif | Anglican | Catholic | Other | Total | Other religions | No religion | Not stated/ inadequately described | **Total** |
| Census year | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | **'000** |
|  | | | | | | | | |
| 1901 | 39.7 | 22.7 | 33.7 | 96.1 | 1.4 | 0.4 | (a)2.0 | **3,773.8** |
| 1911 | 38.4 | 22.4 | 35.1 | 95.9 | 0.8 | 0.4 | (a)2.9 | **4,455.0** |
| 1921 | 43.7 | 21.7 | 31.6 | 96.9 | 0.7 | 0.5 | (a)1.9 | **5,435.7** |
| 1933 | 38.7 | 19.6 | 28.1 | 86.4 | 0.4 | 0.2 | 12.9 | **6,629.8** |
| 1947 | 39.0 | 20.9 | 28.1 | 88.0 | 0.5 | 0.3 | 11.1 | **7,579.4** |
| 1954 | 37.9 | 22.9 | 28.5 | 89.4 | 0.6 | 0.3 | 9.7 | **8,986.5** |
| 1961 | 34.9 | 24.9 | 28.4 | 88.3 | 0.7 | 0.4 | 10.7 | **10,508.2** |
| 1966 | 33.5 | 26.2 | 28.5 | 88.2 | 0.7 | 0.8 | 10.3 | **11,599.5** |
| 1971 | 31.0 | 27.0 | 28.2 | 86.2 | 0.8 | 6.7 | 6.2 | **12,755.6** |
| 1976 | 27.7 | 25.7 | 25.2 | 78.6 | 1.0 | 8.3 | 11.4 | **13,548.4** |
| 1981 | 26.1 | 26.0 | 24.3 | 76.4 | 1.4 | 10.8 | 11.4 | **14,576.3** |
| 1986 | 23.9 | 26.0 | 23.0 | 73.0 | 2.0 | 12.7 | 12.4 | **15,602.2** |
| 1991 | 23.8 | 27.3 | 22.9 | 74.0 | 2.6 | 12.9 | 10.5 | **16,850.3** |
| 1996 | 22.0 | 27.0 | 21.9 | 70.9 | 3.5 | 16.6 | 9.0 | **17,752.8** |
| 2001 | 20.7 | 26.6 | 20.7 | 68.0 | 4.9 | 15.5 | 11.7 | **18,769.2** |

***Figure 1:*** *Religious Affiliation in Australia*

(*Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007*)

**Economic Sustainability:**

Dark tourism may not always be marketed intentionally as a selling point to attract tourists but the continual media attention of certain horrific events only leads to curious tourists around the world. There will always be those who are curious enough to travel to certain places of grief or death to have in their mind a real life vision of the place that a tragedy has occurred. This curiosity attracts people to places across the world and adds to the general tourism population in that region. Pilgrimage tourism on the other hand is not related to negative events so tours, church camps, cruises and even souvenirs are a source of income to increase the money made in that sector of tourism. In a way, Pilgrimage tourism has been commodified to appeal to the modern day person, incorporating leisure and relaxation aspects of some tour packages (*Tour about)*. People are not as traditional with their beliefs compared to hundreds of years ago and the old-fashioned pilgrimages would not appeal to as many people as much as the new ways to go on a spiritual journey do. Like Dark tourism, the general tourism dollar is a result of Pilgrimage tourists with money being spent on accommodation, food and other local businesses in the region that the tourists are visiting.

**Social Issues/Government Impact:**

Although it is not a law, in dark tourism an ethical rule that most people are obliged to follow is that any information shared on a tour is the same information and same story that has always been told.

**Conclusions:**

With regards to Pilgrimage tourism, there is no doubt that it is a sustainable tourism sector. This is evident because after over 1,000 years, the interest is still amongst people. Dark tourism has also been around for many years with more sites and attractions being formed as the years go by. One change that should be made to sites in the dark tourism industry is legal barriers should be introduced, preventing people from going within a certain distance of certain sites because the locals do not need to be reminded constantly by inquisitive tourists exploring the area, of the tragedies that have occurred.

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